

Sea Turtle Handling/Release Guidelines:

Quick Reference for the Reef Fish Fishery

Guidelines for all turtles

- Scan as far as possible to sight turtles in advance and reduce likelihood of jerking turtles out of the water.
- Longline Vessels: Do not get ahead of the line while picking up gear. This reduces the chance of fouling or running over gear and turtle.

Upon sighting a turtle:

- ◆ Slow vessel and line reel speed
- ◆ Adjust direction of the vessel to move toward turtle
- ◆ Minimize tension on the line with the turtle

Holding the line with the turtle on it, continue to move toward the turtle at a slow speed. **STOP VESSEL** and **PUT IN NEUTRAL** once turtle is brought alongside.

- Slowly retrieve line with turtle, keeping a gentle, consistent tension on the line. Avoid tugging or yanking line quickly. **DO NOT USE GAFFS OR SHARP OBJECTS** in direct contact with the turtle to retrieve it; a gaff may be used only to control the line during line removal.
- Ensure that enough slack is left in the line to keep turtle near the vessel, yet in water, until it can be determined whether or not it is possible to release turtle in the water, or safely bring it aboard.
- If turtle can be safely brought aboard and vessel is equipped with "cut-out doors," use this cut-out area to bring turtles aboard to minimize the distance from the water.
- Resuscitate comatose boated turtles as needed, holding them for up to 24 hours (keep moist and in the shade) if necessary.
- More information on releasing sea turtles is available in the *Careful Release Protocols for Sea Turtle Release with Minimal Injury* and on the web at: sero.nmfs.noaa.gov.

Guidelines for turtles not boated

- Control turtle by maintaining pressure on line, or preferably, with a type of turtle tether, and bring the turtle as close to the vessel as possible. **DO NOT** lift turtles clear of the water.
- If entangled and not hooked, use dehooking tools to secure unattached hooks. Use clippers to cut the line. **DO NOT** leave line attached.
- If hooked and entangled, remove the hook first. Then, after the hook is removed, proceed to remove all line.
- All externally embedded hooks should be removed. If hook removal is not possible, cut the line at the eye of the hook (or as close as possible).
- Internal hooks should be removed only if an internal dehooker is being used. Do not attempt to remove hook if the hook has been swallowed beyond where the insertion point of the barb is visible, or when it appears that the hook removal will cause further injury. Remove as much of the line and/or hook as possible.

Guidelines for boated turtles

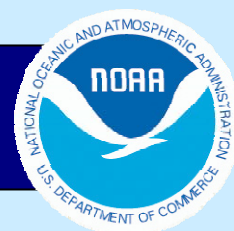
- If possible, bring turtle on board using a suitable dip net or other approved lifting device. Support turtle on a cushioned surface, such as a tire, while onboard.

**DO NOT LIFT THE TURTLE OUT OF THE WATER
USING THE LINE, GAFF,
OR OTHER SHARP OBJECTS**

- Remove all externally embedded hooks.
- Internal hooks should be removed when the insertion point of the barb is clearly visible and only if an approved internal dehooker is being used. Do not remove the hooks that have been swallowed when the insertion point is not visible, or when it appears hook removal will cause further damage (e.g., in the brain case or glottis). Remove as much of the line and/or hook as possible.

Stop!

To release turtle (1) **STOP VESSEL** and place in neutral;
(2) Ease turtle gently into the water, head first, through cut-out door if so equipped;
and (3) Observe that turtle is safely away from the vessel before engaging the
propeller and continuing operations.



Required Item			Examples of NMFS Approved Models
These Items Required for Any Vessel with a Freeboard Height Greater than 4ft	Long-handled line cutter (6ft. or 150 percent of freeboard height, which ever is greater)		LaForce Line Cutter; Arceneaux Line Clipper
	Choose At Least One	Long-handled ¹ (6ft. (1.83 m) or 150 percent of freeboard height, which ever is greater) dehooker for ingested hooks ²	ARC Pole Model, BP11 Deep Hooked Dehooker
		Long-handled ¹ (6 ft. (1.83 m) or 150 percent of freeboard height) dehooker for external hooks	ARC 6 ft. Pole Big Game Dehooker Model 6P10; ARC Model LJ6P (6 ft. or 1.83 m)
	Choose At Least One	Dipnet (must have at least 31 in diameter and handle may be of variable length)	ARC Breakdown Lightweight Dipnet Model (DN6P (6 ft.), DNO8 (8 ft.), or DN14 (12 ft.)); Lindgren Pittman, Inc. Model NMFS-Turtle Net; ARC net assembly and Handle (Model DNIN)
		Short Handled Dehooker for Ingested Hooks ²	ARC 17-in. Hand Held Bite Block Deep Hooked Turtle Dehooking Device (Model ST08)
		Short Handled Dehooker for External Hooks	ARC 16-in Hand Held Large J-style Dehooker (Model LJ07); ARC 24-in Hand Held Large J-style Dehooker (Model LJ24); or ARC 17-in. (43.18 cm) Hand Held Bite Block Deep Hooked Turtle Dehooking Device (Model STO8); or Scotty's Dehooker
		Long-nose or Needle-nose Pliers	12 in. S.S. NuMark Model #030281109871; any 12-in. stainless steel long or needle-nose pliers
		Bolt Cutter	H.K. Porter Model 1490 AC
		Monofilament Line Cutter	Jinkai Model MC-T
		Two (2) of the following Mouth Openers and Mouth Gags	
		Block of Hard Wood	Any block of hard wood or long-handled wire brush (e.g., Olympia Tools Model 974174)
		Set of (3) Canine Mouth Gags	Jorvet Model 4160, 4162, and 4164
		Set of (2) Sturdy Dog Chew Bones	Nylabone®, Gumabone®, or Galileo® (trademarks owned by T. F. H. Publications, Inc)
		Set of (2) Rope Loops Covered with Hose	Any set of (2) rope loops covered with hose meeting design standards
		Hank of Rope	Any size soft braided nylon rope is acceptable, provided it creates a hank of rope approximately 2–4 in. thickness
		Set of (4) PVC Splice Couplings	A set of (4) Standard Schedule 40 PVC splice couplings (1-in., 1.25-in., 1.5-in., and 2-in.)
		Large Avian Oral Speculum	Webster Vet Supply Model (Model 85408); Veterinary Specialty Products (Model VSP 216–08); Jorvet (Model J–51z); and Krusse (Model 273117)
Gear Recommended ³	Standard Automobile Tire ³ Recommended for all vessels		Any standard automobile tire or other comparable, cushioned, elevated surface that allows boated turtles to be immobilized
	Long-handled device to pull an “inverted V” (6 ft. (1.83 m) or 150 percent of freeboard height, which ever is greater) ³ Recommended for vessels with a freeboard height greater than 4ft.		ARC Model LJ6P (6 ft.); ARC Pole Model Deep Hooked Dehooker (Model BP11); ARC 6 ft. Pole Big Game Dehooker (Model P610); Davis Telescoping Boat Hook (Model 85002A); West Marine Fishing Gaff (Model F6H5 with F6–006 handle)

¹ A short-handled dehooker with an appropriate length handle extender will also fulfill this requirement.

² A dehooker that is approved for the removal of both internal and external hooks is recommended. Do not attempt to remove ingested hooks until you have received training on the proper use of internal dehookers and internal dehooking techniques.

³ This gear was inadvertently omitted in the final rule due to an error. Therefore, these items are currently not required but are recommended. Measures to require these items will be proposed and if approved, they will be required.

Disclaimer: This placard is meant to help fishermen comply with sea turtle release measures contained in regulations published in the *Federal Register* on August 9, 2006 (71 FR 45428), and select the appropriate required sea turtle release gear for their vessel. All sea turtle release gear must meet the specific requirements in 50 CFR 635.21(c)(5)(A-L). Any discrepancies between the contents of this guide and the regulations will be resolved in favor of the regulations published in the *Federal Register* or Code of Federal Regulations.